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# Espionage and the summit

The Soviet jailing of American journalist Nicholas Daniloff poses a growing threat to the possibility of another superpower summit. The incident represents a major mistake by the Kremlin and a chance victory for the elements within the Reagan administration who have been afraid that the President actually might try to make some kind of arms control deal in the closing years of his second term.

And the whole affair suggests something fundamental about the relationship of the United States and the Soviet Union. Because of the arrest of a Soviet spy in New York and the framing of an American journalist in Moscow, the fragile effort to put together some accommodation between the superpowers has been damaged. As they have in the past, the cynical requirements of intelligence and counterintelligence operations have corrupted international negotiation. Espionage operates by the law of the jungle, and when it emerges into the light it threatens any civilized exchange.

As is so often the case, the Daniloff affair has become a kind of Rorschach test that reveals the deepest attitudes about how foreign policy should deal with an adversary like the Soviet Union. Some people look at it and see evidence that the United States must negotiate with the Soviets—in order to moderate the malignant and dangerous competition to whatever extent possible. Others see proof that no negotiation will ever succeed because the Soviets, especially when they are under strain, behave like thugs.

The truth is something in between. The Daniloff affair suggests both why it is so important to try to erect rules to govern the competition between the two governments and also why it will always be so difficult to do so.

Of course, for some people on either side of the great ideological divide any element of conflict is an opportunity. The Kremlin succumbed to its own worst instincts, represented by the menacing glower of the KGB, when it jeopardized all of Soviet Chairman Mikhail Gorbachev's international image enhancement efforts by framing a U.S. journalist and clapping him in irons. Was it really worth showing the world the

crude and brutal face of the Soviet police state just to try to spring a hapless, failed intelligence agent from a U.S. prison?

On the U.S. side, after an initial period of caution during which it was willing to consider bargaining for Mr. Daniloff's release, the White House soon hardened to the point of virtually excluding any swap and calling into question all elements of the relationship, including the summit.

Of course, the superpowers had little chance of success to begin with and that is because, especially since Ronald Reagan took office, suspicion, cynicism and opportunism have been the beginning and end of U.S.-Soviet relations. In this sense, the shadowy, primeval world of espionage has become the world in which we all live.

And Mr. Daniloff and the summit are its latest victims.